4: Flannery & Cooper E-5 (1939-1945) 1946
NQ13 Gros Ventre NQ13

SOUTHWESTERN JOURNAL OF ANTHROPOLOGY

Published by the University of New Mexico
and the Laboratory of Anthropology, Santa Fe
in the interest of general Anthropology

VOLUME 2
1946

UNIVERSITY OF NEW MEXICO PRESS
ALBUQUERQUE

[Title Page]

4: Flannery & Cooper E-5 (1939-1945) 1946
NQ13 Gros Ventre NQ13

SOCIAL MECHANISMS IN GROS VENTRE GAMBLING

REGINA FLANNERY AND JOHN M. COOPER

INTRODUCTION

THE PRESENT PAPER is offered as a modest start toward opening up what looks like a promising field, namely, the social implications of gambling.

Our anthropological sources yield a fairly generous amount of information on the world distribution of gambling,[1] the games and sports gambled on, the valuables wagered, the payment of gambling debts, and the ritual accompaniments of gambling. On the other hand, the same sources yield extremely meager information, and for most gambling peoples none at all, on such social aspects of gambling as: its mode of meshing into the prevalent social organization (who gambles, with whom, and for what); its effectiveness in fulfilling or thwarting the wishes of the individual gambler and in meeting or blocking the needs of integral and fractional social groups; individual differences in participation and the motivations responsible for them; native attitudes toward gambling; the economic and other factors that are favorable or unfavorable to the rise and persistence of gambling in culture as such or in given cultures. Field and library studies of these and most other social aspects of gambling have been almost entirely neglected by anthropologists.[2] And, so far as the present writers have been able to discover from rapid search among the sociological sources and from random inquiries among their sociological friends, such studies have also been almost entirely neglected by the sociologists, even by those specializing in the area of delinquency.

The following pages are an attempt to present the gambling complex, with emphasis on certain of its social aspects, as it existed during the second half of the last century among the Gros Ventre of Montana. Most of the complex is now a thing of the past. New gambling games, particularly playing cards, have superseded the old, and gambling itself, on the reservation and among the Gros Ventre in general, is not the tense and meaningful activity it used to be.

The data on which this paper is based were gathered, incidentally to a gen-

1 World distribution is spotty and far from universal. A summarized world distribution, based on several hundred sources, is given in J. M. Cooper, *Temporal Sequence and the Marginal Cultures* (Anthropological Series, Catholic University of America, no. 10, 1941), pp. 67-68.

2 Father Gerald Desmond's *Gambling among the Yakima*, from his field study of 1944, a manuscript now being prepared for publication, is devoted largely to the social aspects.

4: Flannery & Cooper E-5 (1939-1945) 1946
NQ13 Gros Ventre NQ13

121 eral study of the social organization and religion of the Gros Ventre, at the Fort Belknap Reservation, Montana, in about equal proportions by Flannery in the summers of 1940 and 1945 and by Cooper in the summers of 1939 and 1940, from Gros Ventre informants, mostly of the older generation. In most cases we 115 used interpreters; in some, we communicated in English. Our chief informants on gambling were: The Boy (b.1872, our most important source, who had gotten a good deal of his information from his father, Lame Bull, b.1825, d.1908), Thick (b. ca. 1870-71), Charles John Buckman (b.1872), Mrs Takes-a-Prisoner Warrior (b. ca. 1850-55) and Mrs Singer Sleeping-Bear (b. ca. 1860). These informants were exceptionally intelligent and dependable, and were not only willing to give us the information they had but anxious to do so. In spite of this, not all the past could, of course, be recaptured, and in certain parts the picture we got is far from complete, particularly regarding individual differences and motivations. However, we have had extremely little reconstruction proper to do, as most of the older gambling complex survived up to near the turn of the century, and had been actively participated in and/or witnessed and was vividly remembered by our informants, while some parts of it, especially many of the social aspects thereof, have persisted down to the present.

WAGERS AND BETTING PROCEDURE

525 Stakes wagered by the Gros Ventre may be divided into small or trivial ones and big or valuable ones. Small stakes consisted of such things as arrows, bows, bags, beads, pipes, knives, handkerchiefs, dishes, and so forth; big ones, of such things as guns, saddles, lodges, and especially horses (the chief wealth in the old days). Wives were never wagered. Two teams might play mostly for fun, the losers being merely expected or obligated to provide a smoke, or, as more commonly, refreshments or a meal—"to cook," as the current expression goes—for the winners. This last was seemingly the only type of non-dyadic wagering in vogue among the Gros Ventre, if it can be called wagering at all, for such provision of smokes or food for relatives and friends was an everyday custom. Mrs Sleeping-Bear stated that in a gambling game she once played with her husband's brother, she forfeited her eyebrows, which he pulled out, but whether this was an exceptional occurrence or a customary one within the prevalent pattern of rough familiarity between brother-in-law and sister-in-law we could not discover.

Betting was typically dyadic, a given individual matching the wager of another individual, and the stakes going to the winning individual. The dyadic system was kept to even where, as was common, betting was by sides, each side,

4: Flannery & Cooper E-5 (1939-1945) 1946
NQ13 Gros Ventre NQ13

composed of several or many participants, betting on its favorite player or team. 525
There was no pooling of bets by groups, with equal division of gains among the winners, apart from the "stakes" of food or smokes above mentioned. A given person could put up two or more wagers in a given contest with two or more other persons, but any one wager laid by any one person had to be matched by a single individual. Thus a handkerchief might be matched by another one of equal value, a good horse by another good horse, and so forth. In one case we recorded, a watch was matched against a pair of field glasses, the matching being calculated more by use-value to the respective owners than by money-value or "store-value." Finally there was seemingly no gambling on the promissory principle. Bettors had to have the stakes on hand and to put them up on the spot in full sight of players and onlookers, except of course where a man's lodge or perhaps a given horse at pasture was wagered. Consequently gambling debts proper were not incurred; at most a man lost all he actually possessed at the time. If in the course of a game, he had lost all he had actually at hand and wanted to bet more, he would send for or fetch the articles he wanted to put up.

In gambling activities, certain rather elaborate rules obtained as to who could gamble and could not gamble, with whom, and for what—rules which will be explained later in connection with the wheel game and especially with the hand game.

GAMBLING GAMES AND SPORTS

The Gros Ventre gambled, or gamble, chiefly at the following games and sports: 2-button hand game, wheel (hoop-and-pole) game, horse and foot races, dice, ring-and-pin, bow and arrow contests, and, more recently, playing cards. Of these the more important, as judged by size of wagers, by degree of participation, and by intensity of interest, were the 2-button hand game, the wheel game, and the races. We shall take up, first and briefly, the minor gambling games and sports, and get them out of the way, and after that, in more detail, the above three major ones.

Minor Gambling Games and Sports

The dice game, played with four dice having marks carved or painted on them, was a woman's game.[3] The dice were rubbed in the hands and then thrown down. Ordinarily the wagers were small, but sometimes even horses were lost and won by the women.

3 Illustrations of Gros Ventre dice are given in S. Culin, *Games of the North American Indians* (Twenty-Fourth Annual Report, Bureau of American Ethnology, 1907), figs. 54-55, p. 71, and A. L. Kroeber, *Ethnology of the Gros Ventre* (Anthropological Papers, American Museum of Natural History, vol. 1, pt. 4, 1908), figs. 14-18, pp. 184-186.

4: Flannery & Cooper E-5 (1939-1945) 1946
NQ13 Gros Ventre NQ13

525 Women (and men?) also gambled at ring-and-pin, the "ring" being made of four bones from deer feet.[4] The contest was mostly just for fun; the losers would have to "cook" for the winners.

Several types of bow and arrow contests, serving as archery practice as well as gambling sports, were indulged in by boys, young men, and sometimes older men, not, however, by girls or women. Both distance and accuracy contests occurred. In the latter, the target was a stick or arrow stuck upright in a small mound, or an arrow shot by one contestant a desired distance, say, 100 or 150 yards. In another kind of contest, a bow was set slanting, string upward; the string was vibrated by an arrow and the arrow on release flew toward the target about 35 or 40 feet away. In these bow and arrow contests, the wagers were small, usually arrows, sometimes a bow. Wagers were made by the players, and at times by onlookers too.

The modern 4-button hand game, distinct from the earlier 2-button one, is played more for fun than for winnings. At most the losers may be expected to [177] "cook" for the winners. This modern non-gambling hand game came to the Gros Ventre through an Arapaho, Dances All Night, in 1897, shortly after the [68] time the Ghost Dance was introduced among them (in 1891). The Ghost Dance itself had little popularity among the Gros Ventre and after a couple of years died out among them, but the non-gambling hand game took root and survived. At first, we were informed, it was played with two buttons, but after 1903 with four.

525 178 Gambling at playing cards, sometimes for large stakes, occurs today, but usually at the nearby white settlements, between Gros Ventre and white males. Some of the older Gros Ventre are shrewd poker players, and the younger ones play pokèr among themselves, but we obtained no record of ruinous stakes at cards among the Gros Ventre themselves on the reservation.

Major Gambling Games and Sports

525 The three more important gambling games and sports of half a century or more ago were races, the wheel game, and the 2-button hand game.

1. *Races*

[575] [648] On horse races, usually between the two soldier-police societies, the Stars and Wolves (the latter became later the "Grass Dancers"), or between the Gros Ventre and other tribes, such as the Piegan, at intertribal gatherings, were placed large bets—horses, saddles, and so forth—by the men, not however by

4 Illustration in Culin, *op. cit.*, fig. 706, p. 537.

4: Flannery & Cooper E-5 (1939-1945) 1946
NQ13 Gros Ventre NQ13

women or children. The winners would twit the losers with such remarks as: 525
"Don't use that horse to race with. Use it to pack meat." Horse races for prizes, as distinct from wagers, did not occur.

Bets, often large ones, of horses and so forth, were laid on foot races, particularly on foot races between champions of the two above-mentioned soldier-police societies.

2. *The Wheel Game*

While large bets were often laid on horse and foot races, the most intense gambling interest of the Gros Ventre appears to have centered on the wheel game and the 2-button hand game.

The wheel game, as the present-day English-speaking Gros Ventre call it, was a variety of the hoop-and-pole game. The implements used in it were: a small buckskin-wrapped hoop about 3-5 inches in diameter, with variously colored large trade beads strung within the rim,[5] a "pole" consisting of an arrow or a stick, and a set of short sticks serving as tallies or counters. The court was about 25-30 feet long with, at each end, a log or other obstruction against which the wheel bumped and then fell. One of the two players would roll the wheel underhand with his right hand, and the two players, each with his pole, would trot on toes, sideways or backwards, stooped over somewhat, alongside the rolling wheel. As the wheel bumped against the obstruction, each would hurriedly but deftly throw down his pole for the wheel to fall upon. If according to the count of beads the roller lost the throw, the other player then rolled. The wheel was rolled back and forth in the court alternately. The roller had a slight advantage over his opponent, but he had to play fairly and roll the wheel vertically, for if he rolled it slanting so that it fell toward him too often he was not considered a good sport.

Before the game started the two players agreed upon the number of counters (say ten for each player) that would constitute a game, upon the value in counters of each bead, and upon one particular bright- or odd-colored bead which would win all the counters and with them the game and the stakes. The counters were not put in one single pile, as they were in the 2-button hand game. They were "bought" with the wagers in equal numbers by the two players from a man widely known for his honesty and integrity who functioned in the game as keeper of these wheel-game counters. This man sat all through the course of the game and "sold" counters to the two players. Each player had a second or representative who looked after his counters, receiving or giving

5 Illustration in Kroeber, *op. cit.*, fig. 22, p. 188.

4: Flannery & Cooper E-5 (1939-1945) 1946
NQ13 Gros Ventre NQ13

525 according to the fortunes of play on orders from the principals. Each player also selected a watcher who had to see that the game was played straight.

If the wheel after falling came to rest on neither player's pole, no counters were won by either player, but the player towards whose pole the wheel came to rest closer won the right to roll the wheel next. Whether counters were won by relative closeness of pole to bead or by actual contact only, is a minor point we could not clear up.

Once a player had thrown his pole, touching it was strictly forbidden: "You could not even blow on it," as one informant expressed the matter. At times there were close decisions and arguments would arise over the lay. If the two opponents could not come to an agreement, each would look over the spectators and each would pick out some man of known fairness and probity to act as referee. To be chosen as referee in a big game was looked upon as a high honor. The two referees might have to lie down flat on the ground in order to get as close view as possible, and each might argue his case for his chooser. An agreement reached by the two referees was supposed to be final and without appeal. Sometimes, however, the argument would end in blows.

The wheel game was ordinarily played outside the camp circle, not as the result of any strict prohibition, but merely to be out of people's way. For a big game would attract a large number of spectators and backers, and interest was intense, so intense in fact that in an all-day series of games neither player nor onlookers might go back to their lodges to cook and eat, but might forego eating or else have the food brought to them by the women. Relatives and other partisans of the winning player might provide food for all present, with boasting comments, such as: "Our 'race-horse' here is not just a young fellow. He can feed this whole crowd here too. We will show you how this is done, just as he is showing his opponent how to play."

The onlookers had to keep from getting in the way of players, and could not interfere in any way. Nor was there any rooting by them. In fact, while the game was all-absorbing for players and for spectators, it was played tensely, quietly, and gravely, without the noise and hubbub that characterized the 2-button hand game. And no songs were sung by any one during it; the winner would merely give a yell at the end. Should the winner's pole touch the "joker" bead, he would just walk away, and some one or more of the crowd would walk up to the spot where the wheel lay and would say: "Yes, that's the 'joker' bead." The winner, however, might twit the loser, with some such remark as: "My friend, haven't you any better sense than to gamble with me. You know or ought to know that you don't amount to much."

4: Flannery & Cooper E-5 (1939-1945) 1946
NQ13 Gros Ventre NQ13

The wheel game, too, in contrast to the 2-button hand game, was accompanied with no legerdemain and no grace or fancy movements. The players might run or trot in a rather awkward or ridiculous fashion, "awfully funny, like a chicken walking backwards," as one informant put it; but they did not care what the crowd might think of their queer or clumsy gait; they were out to win; they would await some other occasion "to show off handsome."

Likewise, in the wheel game, no prayers to any being were said and there was no resort to supernatural power gotten from prairie chickens or ghosts (see *infra* under hand game). Even if a given wheel-game player had such power, it was of no avail in the wheel game and was not called upon. In the gambling-for-scalps story, to be mentioned presently, the Gros Ventre prayed to the Supreme Being to win, but here there was question not so much of winning material goods as of preserving physical wholeness and life itself, things within the peculiar keeping of the Supreme Being in Gros Ventre theology.

Success in the wheel game depended on two things: skill and what may be called thought-wish power. In the play all effort was concentrated by the players on the utmost exercise of skill and adroitness acquired through long practice and of judgment, in following the rolling wheel and in throwing the pole at just the precise moment and in just the right manner. But, in at least some of the big wheel games, a sort of thought power or thought-wish power was used by the players. In how far such power can be considered "supernatural" is hard to say; it seems to have been more "natural" than "supernatural," as judged by most definitions of "supernatural." At any rate, it was not a power gained, as most other Gros Ventre supernatural powers were gained, from some being by crying, fasting, and dreaming on mountain tops or along timbered water courses.

Its efficacy was derived ultimately from the player's previous war exploits. Its exercise was along the following pattern. There being no set time for wheel games, one might get under way any time, with relatively small stakes, and develop in the course of play into a really big game, or the game could be a big one from the start. In such a big game, between outstanding opponents, for large stakes and for status (see *infra*), before starting to roll the wheel, each player would in turn take the wheel in one hand and with the other touch his pole (arrow or stick) under the wheel on a particular bead. While doing so he would think with intense concentration of one of his past war deeds—e.g., a horse he took from the very door of his enemy's lodge at great risk of life—and would say in his mind, silently and not audibly: "I am not telling a lie [about this deed]. The powers know I am not telling a lie." He would rehearse the event in his mind, and probably (the point was not fully cleared up by us) would think of

4: Flannery & Cooper E-5 (1939-1945) 1946
NQ13 Gros Ventre NQ13

525 some object connected with the deed, which was of the same color as the bead
789 he was touching.

This thought-wish was a sort of indirect or implicit oath, not a formal audibly uttered one. If he actually had done no such deed, he could not hope to have good fortune from such intense concentration of thought and wish. But it was not a prayer proper; he was not asking anything directly of any being. The act was called beta´c"et". It may be added here parenthetically that a highly abstract concept of effective power from deeply sincere wish or intense thought or from both combined plays an important part in many phases of Gros Ventre life even today.

While the player was making this silent wish, the spectators would speculate a lot about which of his great war deeds he was thinking. Later the winner would recite publicly the great deed he had been thinking about. In doing so he had to keep scrupulously to the facts, facts well known to the people, for he was looked upon as a man of character and high standing with a reputation gained by merit, sacrifice, and risk of life.

525 If a player were losing, one of his kinsmen, friends, or backers might volunteer to take his place playing, and also (apparently: our field evidence is not fully clear) to use his own war deeds power.

The main gambling at the wheel game was for stakes wagered by the two players themselves, a given piece of property against an equivalent piece for each game of any agreed number, say 10, of counters won. But the spectators, too, often bet on the game, although not so generally, it appears, as they did at the 2-button hand game. The wagers by players or spectators could be small or large. Two given players might keep at play many hours in succession, playing game after game. In some instances the betting between the two players would result in the loss by one of the last bit of his property—horses, blankets, clothing, household utensils, even his lodge itself. A comparatively wealthy man could thus become a "pauper" in a day. Often, too, the relatives of the players would win or lose almost as heavily in backing their respective kinsmen.

554 In some of the big wheel games the "social" stakes were as important as or
525 more important than the property ones, as illustrated in the case of Lame Bull given below. Two prominent men, enemy friends to each other and at the same time rivals for prestige and status in the tribe, would on a given day play the game *à outrance*. The winner's status and prestige would be greatly exalted; the loser's proportionately lowered. A man's whole career of advancement to prominence in the tribe—a basic ambition among Gros Ventre men—could be brought to ruin in a single day's gaming at the wheel game. He might lose not

4: Flannery & Cooper E-5 (1939-1945) 1946
NQ13 Gros Ventre NQ13

only his property and so have to begin accumulating again from scratch, but might at the same time lose as well his standing in the tribe and become a defeated and disgraced nobody, of a low standing from which it was very difficult to rise in the scale.

The wheel game was not played by women or children, nor apparently by the very young men, but only by fully adult or middle-aged men and older ones, and by only two players at a time. The really big games with large stakes were in most cases, it seems—almost all, according to our informants—played by two "enemy friends" or "war friends." Such enemy friends or war friends were very different from ordinary friends or "true" pledged friends. An "enemy friendship" was a war-related compact entered into in the following manner. A member of a returning war party would give some trophy or booty he had taken from the enemy—e.g., a scalp, or horse, or weapon—to one of his own compatriots of the same or opposite sex, who had little choice but to accept. Acceptance made "enemy friends" or "war friends" of the two. War friends, particularly if unrelated and both males, could go the limit in twitting and insulting each other and in playing practical jokes, even rather outrageous ones, on each other, and the victim had to take such behavior in good part, at least externally. However, along with the privilege of taking such liberties ran the accepted obligation to stand by each other in real need or hazard of grave nature.

The two war friends could gamble with each other. In fact, gambling among the Gros Ventre reached at times its climax in contests between two war friends. A wheel game between war friends commonly arose out of a "bragging match" between them; one would challenge the other to play the wheel game. If the one challenged declined to accept the challenge, his war friend who challenged him, and his other war friends, would ever after take occasion to deride him publicly for it at the least provocation. So the challenge could not easily be declined. The game often became one in which each enemy friend would go out to strip the other of practically everything he owned—horses, gun, blankets, lodge—and at which the most eager interest was aroused among the relatives, fellow-clansmen, and friends of the respective players and, for that matter, among the whole camp population. Such enemy-friend contests were commonly protracted sessions, often all-day ones, at the wheel game.

The following three narratives of particular wheel-game gambling contests—the first two of which are matters of well-remembered recent history, the third an older traditional story paralleled elsewhere on the Plains—throw some further light on the social role of the Gros Ventre wheel game.

4: Flannery & Cooper E-5 (1939-1945) 1946
NQ13 Gros Ventre NQ13

525 572 578 538 *Narrative 1.* In 1893 two Gros Ventre, enemy friends to each other, Red Whip who died in 1912 and Many Tail Feathers, got into a gambling game with the wheel. Many Tail Feathers was losing and he got angry. He grabbed Red Whip and they had a rought-and-tumble tussle. They fell to the ground, with Red Whip on top, astraddle Many Tail Feathers. Red Whip drew his knife, cut off all of the other's hair, at which loss the latter cried while the people cheered a cheer of contempt. Red Whip acting as if he had scalped an enemy, threw the hair in the air, and said in the hearing of all: "What's the matter with you, my friend? You must have a weak heart. Look at me. This is what I did to my enemy [such and such a time]. You know all about it. I just wanted to show you that I am your superior in matters of this kind. But anyhow you can have that good horse of mine."

[115] *Narrative 2.* Lame Bull, father of The Boy, our chief informant on gambling, died in 1908 at the age of 83 or 84 years. Lame Bull, when still a fairly young man, a rising one with prospects of rising higher and higher in the prestige scale, had been chosen as an enemy friend by White Owl, an older man, and Lame Bull had, according to custom, accepted the offer. An offer of enemy friendship was on the one hand almost mandatory, and on the other, where it came from an outstanding man of great experience and ability, as in this case, it was a real honor to the recipient and would rarely be refused.

When Lame Bull and White Owl became enemy friends, they "started to act like two roosters" and were saying to themselves: "I am going to get you when you are off your guard." Both knew that at some time or another, sooner or later, they would have to do something to put their enemy friendship to the greatest test. After much sparring around, the two men engaged in a wheel game as just such a climactic test. At this game White Owl had a big reputation (besides all his other accomplishments), while Lame Bull had no reputation at all at it.

On this occasion Lame Bull wagered everything he owned, and all his wife's property, including their lodge. As it was customary at such events for the kinsmen of the respective players to bet on their kinsman, Lame Bull's father, together with other relatives wagered large stakes on him, although the father was strongly opposed on principle to such betting and had always counseled Lame Bull strenuously against it. More, however, than large amounts of property was at stake; the players' relative and absolute standing in the tribe hung upon the outcome. In the case of Lame Bull and White Owl, the former a younger man of great promise, the latter an older one of recognized prominence, the rivalry was keen and, in a very true sense, ruthless. The older man was jealous of his great reputation and did not want any one to get near him in prestige. He was trying to crush Lame Bull's rising career betimes lest later Lame Bull might outdo him. At the same time, White Owl stood to profit even if he lost, for he would still be attached as enemy friend to Lame Bull and would have reflected prestige from being the enemy friend of this rising man. He would thus profit inevitably by the latter's prestige.

Lame Bull lost everything in the contest, and, of course, his father and relatives lost heavily. White Owl's people tore down Lame Bull's lodge and took it away as winnings and took everything in it, even down to the dishes of Lame Bull's wife. At the end of the playing, Lame Bull was an object of charity and a laughing stock.

About the only thing that earned him a bit of recognition was the fact that in spite of his loss of property and of status—to have recognition at all you had to have some possessions to hold and to give away in presents—and in spite of the strutting and crowing and twitting by the winner and his followers after the playing was over, Lame Bull did not lose his temper. 525 572 578 538

When the playing ended, Lame Bull had nothing of his own except his wife. So his father and mother invited them to eat. Downcast, embarrassed, ashamed, "feeling like a small potato," he ate. When he had finished, his father gave him such a tongue lashing that Lame Bull, who was very fond of his father, cried, and Lame Bull was a strong man who did not easily cry. He felt so bad that he went out on the hills and cried and cried, and slept out there, and came back a pretty sorry young man. And for a long time after, his wife, who also was one of his enemy friends, would throw this up to him: "Oh, you are nothing. You were always weak. Look what your enemy friend did to you. You will never amount to anything." And she would say such things to him especially when others were present. So she set about training him. At any rate Lame Bull was cured of gambling by his great loss to White Owl.

As time went on, Lame Bull recovered from the defeat which might have wrecked for good the career of another. His people had given him enough property to make a new start in life. He would invite White Owl to his lodge and give him big feasts and would make valuable presents of horses and such things to him. And White Owl would make a mental note of these things and would say to himself: "All right, my friend, you wait and see what I will do for you", awaiting the proper time to reciprocate, as was Gros Ventre custom. So a long time afterwards White Owl made very valuable presents to Lame Bull. And they were very good friends.

Narrative 3. Long ago, the story runs, a young Gros Ventre warrior went off alone on a war raid. He got to a mountain, and after nightfall went into a cave to camp overnight. On feeling around in the darkness he found some one else there, and said to himself: "An enemy." To make sure he asked by touching the skin of the other's forearm. The other by wiggling his finger on the Gros Ventre's chest signified: "I am a Snake Indian." So the Gros Ventre took the Snake's hand and made the sign of "big belly" to signify: "I am a Gros Ventre." 525 648 538

The Gros Ventre then said to the Snake: "Let's not fight tonight. You go to sleep and I'll go to sleep. Tomorrow morning we'll see what we'll do." But being afraid of each other, neither slept at all during the night.

The next morning the Gros Ventre asked the Snake: "Friend, where were you going?" He replied: "On the war path." "Alone?" "Yes, all alone." The Snake then asked the same questions and got the same answers. Then the Gros Ventre said: "We are both alone. Instead of killing each other, let's gamble with the wheel. The loser loses his scalp to the winner."

So they started to play, with such things as bow and arrows and clothing for stakes, and the Snake won everything from the Gros Ventre. Then the Gros Ventre proposed: "Friend, you stake all you have won, in a lump, against my scalp," and this was agreed upon. At this point the Gros Ventre got afraid he would lose, so

525 he prayed to I[x]tcibiniąt'à, the Supreme Being: "Have pity on me, so I may beat
648 this man. I'll make a Medicine Dance when I get back home." And as he prayed,
538 he took his arrow and the wheel, and put the arrow on the winning bead of the wheel, and prayed to the Supreme Being that when the wheel was rolled it would fall just that way on the arrow. So when the Gros Ventre rolled the wheel, it fell as he had prayed it would, and he won back all that he had lost.

Then the two men started all over again, and this time the Gros Ventre won everything from the Snake. So the Snake in turn proposed: "Friend, you stake all you have won, in a lump, against my scalp." They played again and the Gros Ventre won.

The Snake then said: "Now you have won my scalp. Tie my head around [at the level of the forehead], then take your knife and cut, and pull off my scalp. And after my scalp is off, go to that hill yonder and wave it at me and sing. Then you go back home and I'll go back home." All this the Gros Ventre did. But before leaving, he said to the Snake: "My friend, you came from a long way off. So did I. It is bad enough that you have lost your scalp. So I am going to give you back some of your things that you'll need on your way back home." So the Gros Ventre gave him back his robe, moccasins, bow and arrow, and knife, saying: "You'll need these."

3. *The 2-Button Hand Game*

525 The wheel game, as played and gambled on in really big contests by outstanding enemy friends, was in some respects the supreme gambling game of the Gros Ventre. It was supreme at least in the intensity of interest it aroused as a spectacle and supreme in the value of what was won and lost, not merely the great amounts of property wagered, but, still more, such prestige and status or loss thereof as could make or break the contestants' careers. On the other hand, as regards everyday popularity, frequency of use, and range of participation, first rank in the gambling complex was held, it clearly appears, by the old 2-button hand game, the predecessor of the modern non-gambling 4-button hand game. In the following pages we shall use the term "hand game" without qualification to designate this earlier pre-Ghost-Dance hand game proper.

The hand game could be played at nearly any time. There were no set occasions for it, though some were more favorable than others, especially intertribal gatherings. Commonly a game started just with some one proposing: "Let's gamble." So somebody would go to the nearest bush and cut the required twelve sticks, each about a foot in length, for counters. Sometimes the bark would then be peeled off the sticks and the ends thereof squared, but this was not necessary. Then agreement was reached on what would serve to hide as the two required "buttons"—such as a bit of "sun-shell" off an earring for the "short" button, and an end of horn off a bracelet for the "long" button. There

4: Flannery & Cooper E-5 (1939-1945) 1946
NQ13 Gros Ventre NQ13

had to be two buttons, a "short" and a "long" one.[6] Very commonly the game 525
was played inside a lodge, with the main center of interest opposite the door, but outdoor playing also occurred frequently.

When the game took place inside a lodge the arrangement and line up were about as follows. The twelve counters were in one pile at the rear opposite the door. The two teams, of any number each, were lined up from rear to door facing each other, with a tent pole or sections of one before each team to beat time upon and with the wagers placed in view of all between the teams. Each team had its own tally keeper, guesser, hider, assistant hider, and other teammates, ranged in the foregoing order from the counter pile toward the door. We shall call these teams A and B with their respective A and B tally keepers, guessers, and so forth.

The game began with a gambling song, sung, to the measure of a small hand 525
drum and/or beats with sticks on the tent poles lying in front of the teams, by 533
all present, team members and spectators. In 1940 we recorded, as part of a series of 116 Gros Ventre songs, two such gambling songs, sung by The Boy. These two songs are wordless, except for a short sentence or phrase in the middle of each. The wording of one is: ą́ niti be tanąą (general sense: "It's no use you trying to guess me; I'm 'holy'"). The wording of the other, incomplete (as The Boy could not recall the full native text) is: ą́ tibdji nǫ́ nǫ́'tsǫnen ("dogs" "wet legs": allusion not known to The Boy; the full wording was literally: "dogs wet-legs little-legs"). The tunes are lively ones sung in fast time. Only certain songs could be sung in a gambling game; doctors' songs or Medicine Dance songs were taboo therein. If one of the players had his own gambling song gotten from a prairie chicken or ghost (see *infra*), he would start it and the others (only of his own team or side ?) would sing it with him. In the excitement of a game well under way, grunts would often take the place of songs proper.

Each team selected its best player. One held the short button, the other 525
the long one. Player A (of and for team A) hid his button in one of his hands, putting on a show with motions, feints, and so forth. Player B (of and for team B) went through his own show, and finally guessed by pointing. Then B hid and A guessed him. If both guessed correctly or both incorrectly, they each hid and guessed again, and they kept this up until one had guessed correctly and the other incorrectly. So one won the preliminary, and the tally keeper of the winner's side, let us say team A, took four counters from the pile and laid them on his side. The preliminary win also gave the winner's team the right to hide.

6 Illustrations of buttons and counters in Culin, *op. cit.*, figs. 345-348, p. 271.

4: Flannery & Cooper E-5 (1939-1945) 1946
NQ13 Gros Ventre NQ13

525 Next, hider A and assistant hider A each took one of the two buttons and put on their show together, while team A and only team A sang, this time a song different from the one sung by everybody together at the very start of the game. The rule was that after the opening song before the preliminary round, only the team whose turn it was to hold the buttons to hide could sing. Guesser B watched the two hiders closely, scrutinizing their motions, eyes, expression of countenance, everything, for clues. If he came to the conclusion that hider A had one button hidden in his left hand and assistant hider A the other button in his right hand, guesser B so indicated by pointing with his thumb to hider A and at the same time with his index finger to assistant hider A. Suppose he guessed incorrectly in both cases Tally keeper A would then take two more counters from the pile and team A would cheer, shout, and get up and dance around. Team B would begin to get scared, as team A would then have won six of the twelve counters.

If in the next play, guesser B indicated one of the two hiders A correctly and the other incorrectly, team A got another counter, thus leaving five counters in the pile. The hider A (hider or assistant hider) who had not been guessed this last time then took both buttons and worked with them; if guesser B pointing with his index finger for the long one and at the same with his thumb for the short one, guessed wrong, team A won one more counter, and then both hiders A would hide. By this time guesser B would be getting more and more worried, and the supporters of team A might be booing and twitting him: "Those [of team A] are winning and winning."

Let us say guesser B lost again on the double guess; then team A won two more counters (it would now have ten of the twelve). Guesser B might here appeal half-seriously to his supernatural helper, if he had one: "What is the matter with you, prairie chicken (or ghost)? You are failing me."

As neither had been guessed in the last play, the two hiders A would both hide again—interchanging the buttons perhaps, signaling between themselves, making quick motions, and so forth. Suppose hider A was then guessed correctly, but assistant hider A incorrectly, then team A would win another counter, and only one would be left in the pile. Excitement would here reach a climax. Assistant hider A, who had not been guessed just before, would then take both buttons. Let us assume that guesser B finally guessed him right and thus saved the day at the last minute. His side B would cheer and cheer. The one last counter would remain in the center between the two tally keepers, but now B got a chance to win counters.

If team B then won two counters on the next play, in which guesser A did

4: Flannery & Cooper E-5 (1939-1945) 1946
NQ13 Gros Ventre NQ13

the guessing, tally keeper B would take the one counter remaining in the center 525
and also draw one counter from team A's won counters. And so the game went back and forth, one or two hiding at a time according to rule, until one team won all the twelve counters.

A session of hand games might go on for many hours; starting, say, in the morning it might continue throughout the whole day and through the night until the next morning. When any of the players or supporters got hungry, they would go home and eat and then return to the game. After a game in which the twelve counters and stakes were won, and before the next one, there would usually be a little time out for a rest and smoke, and for the placing of bets on the next game.

The atmosphere of the hand game was a holiday one. Raillery was a little rough at times. But for players and spectators, the game was a major source of enjoyment, relaxation, and pleasurable excitement. What with the singing, the drumming, the twitting, the shouting, the often loud and uproarious cheering, the hand game—in rather sharp contrast to the quiet, grave wheel game—was apt to be decidedly noisy, not to say boisterous. Not the least appreciated feature of the hand game was the showmanship, the grace and virtuosity of the players, who played to an appreciative and discriminating house. The victors gloated conspicuously over the losers and bantered them unmercifully, but the losers were expected to keep their tempers, an expectation, however, not always realized.

For success in hand game gambling, most players, it seems clear from our evidence, relied on chance and skill—an occasional one on sleight-of-hand proper—rather than on supernatural power or aid. So far as we could determine, the drumming and singing that accompanied the playing were not of the magico-religious order, at least ordinarily and apart from the exceptional games in which individuals with supernatural power (see *infra*) participated. Certain individuals were, from native keenness or from practice and experience, particularly adept at hiding and guessing, and these were apt to play the role of hiders and guessers for their teammates and backers.

Some few men, however—never women, we were informed—had supernat- 525
ural gambling power. This power might come unsought, as in the case of Keg 789
to be given presently, or, more commonly, was sought. Not many sought it or possessed it. The young were strongly advised against seeking it by their parents and by the tribal counsellors, for the man who sought and obtained it had to pay a heavy penalty. He would be affected with some serious ailment of the limbs, such as pains in and swelling of the joints, and would die before his

4: Flannery & Cooper E-5 (1939-1945) 1946
NQ13 Gros Ventre NQ13

525 789 time. This latter aspect of the belief accorded with the larger Gros Ventre pattern: any acquisition of special supernatural power sought by quest would be apt to lead to shortening of life.

Nevertheless, against the reiterated advice of parents and elders who would so lecture the growing children and of the chiefs and counsellors who would walk around the camp so warning the people, a good many individuals would seek supernatural power, and a few would go out in quest of supernatural gambling power. In some cases such gambling power was sought by a man who had lost heavily or lost his all at the wheel or hand game, as a desperate measure to recoup his losses and to get a new start in his career.

Gambling power was not sought from the Supreme Being, who apparently did not enter at all into the gambling cycle. The appeal to him in the previously given traditional story of gambling for scalps is more a confirmation of than an exception to the rule. Nor was it sought as other power—to be a great warrior or doctor or to acquire wealth or to live long—was sought, by fasting and dreaming on the hill tops. The seeker for gambling power resorted to the brush and timber along watercourses to obtain it from the prairie chickens, [776] or from a ghost. It was more commonly gotten from prairie chickens; but not infrequently from a ghost, not an ancestor of the candidate, at least not necessarily, but, as The Boy put it laughingly, from "any good-natured ghost." This power was gotten for use only in the hand game, not in any other gambling game or sport.

[824] Usually the seeker looked for a place where wild morning glories formed a sort of bower, "like a little lodge or tipi." It was in there that a ghost was believed to live; the morning glory was called tzek'unθänädzu, "ghost rope" (tzek'^{h} or tsä'k'^{a}, "ghost"). The seeker would cry and cry, and when he got sleepy he would crawl into the bower and sleep. Pretty soon a ghost or prairie chicken might ask him: "Why are you punishing yourself so much?" He might answer: "Because I have lost all my belongings." "Is that all? Well, I will help you out," the being or beings would say, and then would give the seeker a song and tell him what rules he must live by and how he must act in the hand game. The person who got such power would not afterwards reveal the details told him by the giver. From the prairie chicken or ghost the person might also get at the same time the power to do marvelous things, such as making an object disappear, swallowing it and then drawing it out of some part of his body, making it go into his skull and come out of his mouth into his hand or go through his veins and come out somewhere else on his person, and so forth (cf. Red Whip story *infra*.)

4: Flannery & Cooper E-5 (1939-1945) 1946
NQ13 Gros Ventre NQ13

Gambling power was of a lower order of dignity and solemnity than power obtained by fasting on the mountains and hill tops. It was taken less seriously, more lightly, and, if we may judge from attitudes today, with an undercurrent of amused jocoseness. It was not, as was power gotten on mountains, transferrable by the original possessor to another, or at least it was not transferred. For one reason others did not usually want it, on account of the ailments and shortened life its possession entailed. A man who was known to have such power was further handicapped: his fellow tribesmen would not ordinarily gamble against him and so his opportunities for participation were few, being limited mostly to games played by the Gros Ventre with other tribes. In such intertribal games, however, he would become a popular champion, and would derive therefrom a certain prestige as well as material gains. The possession then of gambling power, while to a certain limited extent an asset to its owner, was in more respects than one a decided liability.

It may be added here that while those who possessed supernatural gambling power are spoken of today by English-speaking Gros Ventre as "professional gamblers," in reality there were no professional gamblers among the Gros Ventre even in the old days, professional, that is, in the sense of making their living or most of their living at gambling.

The following three narratives, related by The Boy, illustrate various aspects of gambling power.

Narrative 1. Lone Bear, The Boy's wife's father, had gambling power. While he was still in his prime, his legs started hurting him. To escape the penalty he quit gambling. But in vain. His legs went bad, and he died before his time.

Narrative 2. When Lame Bull, The Boy's father, was a young boy about ten years of age he had a friend of about the same age, called Keg, to whom he was much attached. Keg, like other boys of his age, had the daily chore of rising long before daylight and driving out the family horses away from camp to graze. One morning he was awakened very early and was told to drive the horses out. He did so, but when he got out to the grazing ground he decided to steal a few winks lying face down. So he fell asleep, and all at once he started to dream. He dreamed that he saw a big hand game going on with high stakes and one fellow winning everything. Keg looked at this fellow closely and saw it was he, Keg, himself. This man spoke to Keg saying: "Do as you see me doing here. Use my throat as an object [button] to hide."

Then Keg woke up and looked around, and there right near where he lay he saw a covey of prairie chickens doing their mating dance and making a whirring noise with their tails. When he got back he said to Lame Bull: "Let's play and see whether what I dreamed is true. I'll put my helper to the test." Lame Bull tried to guess Keg, but Keg would make a noise like a prairie chicken and thereupon

4: Flannery & Cooper E-5 (1939-1945) 1946
NQ13 Gros Ventre NQ13

525 would switch the button to the other hand without Lame Bull perceiving it, and
789 Lame Bull could not guess him.

So as the two grew up, Lame Bull always bet when Keg was playing and won
539 a lot of stuff that way. Keg started gambling from his boyhood and always had luck. After he grew up, however, he did not have many chances to play, because everybody, knowing his power, shied away from gambling against him. But when he did play, he would win. When he was resorting to his power in a game, he would imitate the hissing, swishing noise made by the prairie chickens when they ruffle their tail feathers. The prairie chicken had also given Keg its windpipe to use (apparently as a button) in the hand game, and for it Keg used a little metal spring resembling the windpipe.

525 *Narrative 3.* During the lifetime of Red Whip (d. 1912), the Gros Ventre on
789 one occasion, about 1873-75, met the Flathead where Lewistown (Montana) now is
539 and camped close together. The latter asked the former to gamble at the hand
648 game. So when night came, they all assembled in a big lodge. The Flathead had a great gambler, nicknamed Crazy Child, who had gambling power and had never been beaten by anyone on the west side of the Rockies. Outside the lodge the young men of both tribes were visiting in a friendly fashion together, and the Flathead young men told the Gros Ventre young men: "Don't get into that game. Our man cannot be beaten," and some of the latter on that account refrained from betting. But the Gros Ventre had a man of their own, Red Whip, who had gambling power from a ghost, greater gambling power than Crazy Child had.

So the hand game started, with big stakes wagered on both sides. Neither champion showed his prowess right away; they just let themselves run along easily for a while. At last Red Whip decided to cut loose: "This Flathead makes me mad. He has hand game power. So I'll have to use mine. Give me a piece of weasel skin and I'll stop his power." They gave him a piece and he rubbed off a small bit of it and put it on the ground and knelt on it with one knee.

Crazy Child, whose hand-game helper was the owl, used every trick his helper had taught him, to hide the button and battle Red Whip, but to no avail, for Red Whip's ghost helper was more powerful than Crazy Child's owl helper. Then Red Whip, when his turn came to hide, said to the Gros Ventre, "I have this Flathead beaten and I know his helper, the owl, has abandoned him; so sing good and loud and beat time fast and lively," and to the Flathead, "Watch closely, and I will let you hunt for the button after I have hidden it." Red Whip then put on a big show, exhibited the button to the Flathead, threw it into the air, and told him to look for it. Crazy Child hooted like an owl and did all sorts of other things like an owl, but finally gave up: "I can't find the button," at which the Gros Ventre cheered uproariously. Then Red Whip got up, showed the Flathead the button, which was embedded in the lodge pole to the left of the door as you go out, and asked him to pull it out. Crazy Child tried to pull it out but failed, but Red Whip pulled it out easily, and said to Crazy Child: "You are nothing. You are just a little fellow. You don't amount to much. I didn't have to try hard to beat you. But I just wanted to show you this."

This great game lasted one whole night; daylight was breaking when the two

 525 789

men called on their helpers. The Gros Ventres won many things of value: many best horses, guns, and clothes; and no Gros Ventre ever gambled against Red Whip after that. 539 648

Men, women, and children could participate in a hand game played by men. All, with an exception or two to be noted, could bet thereon, and men and women could bet on both sides. In a game where the men were players, the women would be present and would join in the singing as well as in the betting, but they could not be guessers, hiders, or tally keepers; only men could be such. Women, however, could so function in hand games among themselves. 525

Actual participation in hand game gambling was high. One of our women informants, Mrs Warrior, never went in for betting, she emphasized; but she seems to have been rather exceptional in this regard. Our other woman informant on gambling, Mrs Sleeping Bear, was much devoted to gambling, for relatively small stakes. Nearly every one, so far as we could make out from our evidence, seems to have gambled, either frequently and habitually or at least from time to time.

Participation, however, followed a well-defined and established pattern as regards who could or should bet with or against whom and for what kind of stakes. For convenience we are calling this the "bettor-wager pattern."

Some persons or classes of persons could not gamble at all or could not gamble against certain others; others could or would gamble against certain others only for refreshments or a meal; others, for small stakes of little value; others still, for big stakes. The Gros Ventre bettor-wager pattern at first glimpse looks complicated, but actually it conforms to a few very simple principles. We shall look first at the pattern itself; afterwards at the principles.

Blood relatives could not gamble against each other either for large or for small stakes. Such blood relatives included parents and children, grandparents and grandchildren, brothers and sisters, uncles and aunts and nephews and nieces, and also all classificatory relatives of the same categories. At most a group of blood relatives might engage in a hand game with the half-serious half-playful agreement that the losing side would "cook" for the winning side. A given gambling team would commonly be composed chiefly of members who were kin to one another, but non-relatives could also be on the team; the opposing team would likewise be commonly composed chiefly of another kinship group. Where blood relatives gambled in the same game for small or large stakes, they always gambled and bet, not against one another, but on the same side, and in wagering they bet on and backed their own kinsman or kinsmen, wagering dyadically against fellow tribesmen or aliens not related to them. 602 525

4: Flannery & Cooper E-5 (1939-1945) 1946
NQ13 Gros Ventre NQ13

602 525 Gambling between blood relatives for property the loss of which would hurt or would entail even small hardship on the loser was evidently looked upon as conflicting with the common loyalty and mutual helpfulness among all blood relatives that were expected by the Gros Ventre social code. The Gros Ventre felt, furthermore, that such gambling might easily give rise to quarreling and ill-will among relatives, whereas the code expected harmony and good will.

As regards affinal relatives, the rules were more complicated and less uniform. Loyalty, helpfulness, and harmony were desired and expected among close relatives by marriage, but the avoidance, respect, and familiarity conventions differed.

606 525 A son-in-law could not gamble at all against his mother-in-law, even on different sides for "cooking" for the winners. On the one hand the rule of respect and avoidance was the most rigid and absolute within the avoidance regulations: they could not look at or speak directly to each other, and could not be in the same lodge together. On the other hand they were expected to be very good and generous to each other. It may be added that these restrictions on the son-in-law applied also to his brothers, presumably too to the mother-in-law's sisters, although we failed to inquire about this last point.

[602] As regards all other relatives by marriage, they, even those prohibited from gambling even for small stakes, were permitted, it seems, to gamble as members of groups against one another where the stakes, if they can really be called such, were merely the above-mentioned "cooking" by the losing side for the winners. Some affinal relatives, however, such as father-in-law and daughter-in-law could not engage in a non-group twosome game, even for fun, just as brother and sister could not do so.

A son-in-law and father-in-law could not gamble against each other even for small wagers; the former could not gamble with the latter's brothers or even his close friends—and presumably vice versa, the father-in-law could not with the son-in-law's. Nor, as mentioned, could daughter-in-law with father-in-law. A son-in-law and father-in-law were under certain restrictions of respect and avoidance but not so absolute as those between son-in-law and mother-in-law; the two men could discuss "business" matters with each other, but could not just sit down and chat together about trivial things and especially about anything concerning sex or the eliminative functions. And about the same rule held for daughter-in-law and father-in-law in their personal relations.

Two brothers-in-law, two sisters-in-law, or a brother-in-law and his sister-in-law (wife's sister or brother's wife) could gamble against each other for small

4: Flannery & Cooper E-5 (1939-1945) 1946
NQ13 Gros Ventre NQ13

stakes, but not for really large ones. A gambling game between two brothers-in-law, small though the stakes had to be, was a good show for the onlookers—not, however, nearly so good as one between two prominent enemy friends. Two sisters-in-law were also "just right" for gambling against each other. 606 525

Through all these three relationships run two currents: one of mutual goodwill and helpfulness, the other of familiarity, "teasing" and twitting. Between two brothers-in-law and two sisters-in-law there is relatively more of the first and less of the second; between brother-in-law and sister-in-law relatively more of the second and less of the first.

Two brothers-in-law could not discuss sex or vulgarity and could not go to the toilet together. They would be helpful to each other in giving presents, in a building project, in business matters, and so forth. But on the other hand they could go quite far in "humiliating" each other, in indulging in practical jokes and horse play at the other's expense, and in rivaling each other in war and in war-deed matching contests—but not to the limit, not so far as enemy friends could go. Two sisters-in-law could likewise "tease" each other, but could not go to the same length that brothers-in-law could go. [522]

To her brother-in-law (sister's husband or husband's brother) a woman could go nearly any length in "teasing" and freedom in the way of crude horse play and of vulgar and obscene talk, and vice versa.

The gambling rule that prevailed, and still prevails largely, between these three types of siblings-in-law, namely, gambling for small stakes permitted and encouraged, but not for large stakes, appears to be genetically related to the two currents we have been discussing: the goodwill one prohibiting stakes whose loss would really hurt, the familiarity one permitting and provoking small-stake gambling. 619 525

The Gros Ventre, with a population range of between about 800 and 2,000 in the second half of the last century, were divided into about a dozen bands. These bands were not sibs proper, but each was composed largely of kin related by blood or marriage. Members of a given band, whether related or not, would not gamble against one another. There was a well-marked we-feeling among the members of a band, somewhat distinct from and additional to the kinship feeling proper. Actually this was almost equivalent to "tribal" we-feeling, for each band was for the greater part of the year, particularly in the winter months when the bands scattered to separate quarters within the tribal territory, an almost completely autonomous economico-political unit, and any band was free if it wished to secede from the tribe at any time, temporarily or permanently. 621 [161]

4: Flannery & Cooper E-5 (1939-1945) 1946
NQ13 Gros Ventre NQ13

621 Members of one band could and not infrequently did gamble both for small
525 and for big stakes against members of other bands, just as one kinship group used to gamble against others. Tribal we-feeling certainly existed, but seemingly not as intense as band we-feeling, just as, in turn, the latter was not as intense as kin we-feeling. / In inter-band, as in inter-kin, gambling, spectators, if they bet at all, would lay their wagers on the players of their own band, as required by band loyalty, regardless of the relative skill and reputation of the contesting players or teams.

575 For Gros Ventre men who had reached full adulthood and were still in the
[885] prime of life, there were two age-societies, called the Stars and the Wolves (or
525 Wolf-men). These two groups, with soldier-police functions, would join forces when necessary in keeping order, in fighting fires, and in defending the whole tribe against enemies, but for the rest rivalry between them was pretty keen. Stars would gamble against Wolves in big games for large stakes, but ordinarily a Star would not gamble against a Star or a Wolf against a Wolf, except for refreshments or a smoke or similar trifling "stakes." Inasmuch as membership in the two societies cut across the lines of kinship and band membership, inter-society gambling suffered an important restriction: if a Star were gambling in a given game, his relatives among the Wolves would not play or bet against him in that particular game. Kinship ties took precedence over society ties.

525 Gros Ventre would of course gamble for big stakes against members of other
648 tribes with whom they happened to be at the time on sufficiently good terms, or at least not bitterly and actively hostile, to meet and foregather peacefully, such as the Piegan, Flathead, Nez Percé, and Cree. In such intertribal contests they would often go out to win every possession of their opponents.

572 The Gros Ventre distinguished three kinds of friends: ordinary friends,
525 true or pledged friends, and enemy or war friends. As a rule ordinary close friends would not take opposite sides in a big gambling game. This was all the more true of pledged friends. Two boys, for instance, who liked each other
[608] and who had perhaps grown up together would, though belonging to different bands, enter into a sort of "sworn brotherhood," give each other presents, exchange intimate confidences, and promise, without religious rite of any kind, to stand by each other always, even to death if necessary. Two girls could also enter into a similar pact. Such "true" or pledged friends never gambled against each other either as players or as backers, at least never for stakes of value.

Of enemy or war friends we have previously spoken when describing the wheel game. Two enemy friends would gamble against each other for small stakes or big, the bigger the better. In fact a hand game for big stakes between

4: Flannery & Cooper E-5 (1939-1945) 1946
NQ13 Gros Ventre NQ13

two enemy friends to strip the loser bare of everything he owned, down to his very lodge, was, like a wheel game of the same order of magnitude, a crowning event in Gros Ventre gambling, one arousing most intense popular interest. One of our informants was, in view of this fact, of the opinion that gambling among the Gros Ventre may have been first invented by enemy friends. 572 525

The keepers of the two most sacred pipes, the Flat Pipe and the Feathered Pipe, were not allowed to gamble with any one, nor were their wives, nor (probably: our chief informant was not sure) ex-keepers. Rare exceptions may have occurred in practice. Should an enemy friend of a keeper taunt him into betting and should the challenger lose, he would lose not only his wager but also in a sense his life. For his life would in consequence be shortened, unless the keeper took pity on him and through submitting him to the appropriate ritual procedure averted the penalty. It was believed too that the keeper could not lose if, against the rules, he really did gamble. Gamblers, at least notorious ones, were not selected as pipe keepers. 792 525

Keepers and their wives were subject to a great many other restrictions. They had to maintain a high degree of dignity, to practise many kinds of abstention and "asceticism," and to be benefactors to and intercessors for all the people. It seems probably that the taboo on their gambling was related to one or more of these aspects of the keepership. [784]

Ritual "grandfathers" among the Gros Ventre were of two kinds. A retiring sacred-pipe keeper became automatically "grandfather" to the incoming keeper and instructed him in the ritual, prerogatives and duties of the keepership; a candidate for a sacred lodge chose an older man who had been through the rite as a ritual "grandfather" who would instruct him in the ceremonies and observances of the lodge in question. A person would never gamble against his ritual grandfather. The relationship established between grandfather and grandchild in both cases was predominantly a respectful and sacred one. Against his ritual grandfather a man would not even play in the modern non-gambling 4-button hand game. [524]

The foregoing rather intricate "bettor-wager" gambling pattern appears to be the result of the orderly interplay of five chief determinants or conditioning factors. 525 571

The most important and most basic determinant was that of in-group altruism, cohesion, and loyalty, decreasing in intensity from closer and smaller circle to more distant and larger circle, from biological family, to kinship group, to band, to lodge and society, to tribe as such, to more or less friendly alien tribe, and stopping short of hostile alien tribe. In general, the less intense the

4: Flannery & Cooper E-5 (1939-1945) 1946
NQ13 Gros Ventre NQ13

525 we-group altruism, cohesion, and loyalty, the more gambling and the greater the
571 stakes and vice versa.

Two less important, secondary determinants were the rules of avoidance and respect on the one hand and those of familiarity and license on the other. In general, the greater the degree of avoidance and respect demanded between two persons or classes, the less gambling and the smaller the stakes; the greater the degree of familiarity and license permitted, the more gambling and the bigger the stakes.

A fourth determinant was the element of the sacred (and/or ascetic) associated with certain offices and with the persons occupying them, an element which barred gambling by and/or against these persons, namely, pipe keepers and ritual grandfathers.

A fifth determinant was obviously in operation, although the field evidence therefor is not abundant. We got no record, however, of Gros Ventre gambling with their ancient, hereditary and bitter enemies, the Sioux. Gambling, even to
[648] strip opponents completely, presupposes a minimum of friendliness between the players, or at least the absence of deadly and unqualified hostility.

If we diagram along a horizontal belt the full range of human relationships from unqualified friendliness and altruism on the extreme left through the various gradations to unqualified hostility and malevolence on the extreme right, Gros Ventre gambling may be represented on this belt as absent from the extreme left end, gradually increasing in frequency and in size of stakes as we pass along the central section toward the right, and then suddenly dropping and completely disappearing near the extreme right end.

Besides these five determinants or conditioning factors in Gros Ventre gambling, there were perhaps others, but this is as far as our evidence and our analysis thereof have gone. Of course, one cannot have gambling without some kind of close-range or long-range contact between the gamblers, without some kind of property or other valued thing to wager, and so forth, but working out a list of such requisites would be labor lost.

Before leaving this subject, we should emphasize that, while the preceding pages have referred particularly to the bettor-wager pattern as holding for the hand game, the same pattern held as well for all other Gros Ventre gambling games and contests.[7]

[171
525] 7 In our world sources on gambling we have noted only two explicit references, and these extremely brief, to the bettor-wager pattern: G. Goodwin, *The Social Organization of the Western Apache* (Chicago, 1942), p. 375, "certain types of gambling" are prevented "between members of the same clan," for it would be "like winning it [property] from yourself"; R.

4: Flannery & Cooper E-5 (1939-1945) 1946
NQ13 Gros Ventre NQ13

NATIVE ATTITUDES

The attitude of the Gros Ventre toward their own gambling was a somewhat ambivalent one. Toward gambling practised within the limitations of the bettor-wager pattern, there was, by and large, no strong disapproval. Such gambling was in the main taken for granted. Yet such approval as was given, even as regards much of the gambling that conformed to the bettor-wager pattern, was in certain respects qualified and circumscribed. 525

Pretty near everyone gambled who had anything to wager. Boys and girls, men and women participated. We recorded only one specific exception, in the person of Mrs Warrior, although there may have been others. There appears to have been no disapproval at all of gambling for "cooking," and very little of gambling for takes of trivial or small value, within of course the bettor-wager pattern. There was a good deal of disapproval of gambling for big or ruinous stakes—how widely shared, how serious, and how "intolerant," it is hard to say.

Parents, however—some at least—commonly counseled their children against

---

Landes, *The Ojibwa Woman* (Columbia University Contributions to Anthropology, vol. 31, 1938), p. 28, differences between gambling by members of same household and by persons from different households. Under date of September 9, 1939, Father Herbert Prueher wrote to Cooper that among the Wachaga of Tanganyika Territory, East Africa, gambling is [only] by non-relatives, distant friends and strangers; under date of June 30, 1944, Father Berard Haile wrote that among the Navaho no gambling occurred between relatives or between members of same clan. 171 525

In short reconnaissance field studies among the Sinkaetku (Southern Okanagon) of Washington, the Kalispel of St Ignatius Mission, Montana, and the Blackfoot of Browning, Montana, in 1938, and the Assiniboine of Ft. Belknap Reservation, Montana, in 1939, Cooper gathered the following fragmentary data on the respective patterns:

Sinkaetku: No gambling against one's brother, sister or cousin: "If my brother wants anything I have, I say to him, 'Take it,' without any question." No gambling between members of same family, nor between members of a group wintering together. Not right to gamble except with "strangers." Intertribal gambling for big stakes customary.

Kalispel: No gambling between brothers. No twosome gambling between cousins, but cousins might gamble as members of opposing teams. Two teams from same village might gamble sometimes, but not often. Gambling is mostly between teams from different villages or tribes.

Blackfoot: Two brothers or two members of same band could gamble against each other only for small stakes; two members of different societies, such as the Brave Dogs and the Doves, could gamble against each other for big stakes, such as horses.

Assiniboine: Blood relatives, such as brothers and other close relatives, would not gamble on opposite sides against one another; they would gamble on same side always. Two brothers-in-law or two sisters-in-law could gamble against each other, but a son-in-law could not gamble against his father-in-law or his mother-in-law on account of current avoidance and respect conventions. Intertribal gambling is customary.

In our own American white culture there are clear indications of a bettor-wager pattern in gambling. No systematic field study thereof has, however, been made, so far as the present writers can discover.

4: Flannery & Cooper E-5 (1939-1945) 1946
NQ13 Gros Ventre NQ13

525 gambling, even for the small stakes, mostly arrows, which children could put up. Further, advice against gambling was commonly given by tribal leaders as well as by relatives and friends, presumably with more particular reference to gambling for high stakes.

[558] Excessive or inveterate high-stake gamblers easily lost the respect of the people and were looked down upon. Such were not likely to be chosen as "chiefs," and could not be chosen as keepers of the sacred pipes. The possession of gambling power from prairie chickens or ghosts netted the possessor a certain prestige, but not nearly the prestige that came from achievements in war or medicine, or even from skill in hunting. Keg, whose story we have given above, had little real prestige, we were told. Red Whip had more, it seems, but this or much of it may well have been the result of his outstanding war record.

The foregoing ambivalent attitude can, we believe, be accounted for, in large part at least, by the data we have, incomplete though these data are. It is pretty clear from the prevalent bettor-wager pattern that the Gros Ventre recognized two more or less conflicting aspects of their gambling: a recreative one and a predatory one. Certain kinds of gambling were indulged in predominantly for friendly recreation, to have a good time together. The minor wagering therein merely added a little spice and zest to play, while the losers suffered no appreciable loss or hurt. Other kinds, the common games for large stakes and the occasional ones for career prestige, were indulged in predominantly for gain and this at the expense of the losers, for acquisition in which the losers suffered losses that were grievously felt and that seriously hurt. As the bettor-wager pattern shows, gambling of the first kinds was recognized as consistent with the accepted canons of in-group altruism and benevolence; that of the second, as inconsistent therewith.

Actually gambling contributed both to social concord and solidarity and to social discord and disunion. It must have contributed in some measure to social concord and solidarity inasmuch as it provided a large measure of pleasurable recreation and excitement shared in common and a relatively innocuous outlet for aggression and dominance. The Gros Ventre were consciously concerned with fomenting solidarity within their ranks: for one thing they were a fighting people beset with powerful enemies. But whether they were aware of the role their gambling played in positively and constructively promoting solidarity is not possible to say on the evidence we have and at this distance of time.

As regards, however, discord resulting from gambling, this was common and they were keenly aware of it. The code demanded that losers should take their losses, together with the associated twitting and strutting by the winners, in good

4: Flannery & Cooper E-5 (1939-1945) 1946
NQ13 Gros Ventre NQ13

part and as good sports, but actual behavior not infrequently fell short of the code's demands. Bad feeling was at times engendered and could and did end in blows and violence, as was noted earlier in our account of the wheel game. Quarrels among gambling boys must have been fairly common. One of our informants, Thick, recounted three different bow and arrow contests for arrows, in which contests he had engaged as a boy with other boys. All three ended in violence started by the losers. In one of the three set-tos, Thick, the winner, was shot in the hand with an arrow by the other boy who lost his temper, and Thick still, at the age of 75, carries the scar. That the Gros Ventre were perfectly aware, as of course they must have been, of the discord hazard in gambling, is clear from such counsel as, for example, Thick's mother used to give him when he was a boy: "If you join in those gambling games somebody is going to get mad on account of getting beaten and he may pound you up." Further, that gambling often led to bad feeling was given to us by The Boy as the reason why the Gros Ventre disapproved of gambling between relatives.

So far as we could make out, Gros Ventre attitudes on gambling were determined in only minor measure by economic considerations. In the days before the disappearance of the buffalo in 1883-84, the Gros Ventre lived under a normal economy of abundance. Moreover, generosity in parting with their possessions, through gift and sharing, was focal in code and practice. Criers around the camp would counsel the people in words such as: "Men and women, don't love your property. You will always acquire other property. Only life never comes back, but property you can have back any time." In the long run for most individuals winnings would balance losses, just as gifts tended to balance gifts—a system of exchange which incidentally must have served to prevent unhealthy accumulation of wealth in the hands of any individual or small group. The cases of really ruinous loss of property through gambling, of reduction to "pauperism," appear to have been rare, and even in these cases the losers would ordinarily be looked after temporarily and tided over by their kin or friends. At any rate we got no record of individuals or their dependents suffering grave privation of the necessities of life as a result of gambling losses.

How far such facts entered into the Gros Ventre attitude toward gambling cannot be determined confidently from such evidence as we have. In our hours of free discussion with informants, there was almost no intimation of economic considerations leading to disapproval. One of the themes in the tongue-lashing Lame Bull got from his father after the disastrous contest with White Owl may have been the economic, but this was not expressly stated by The Boy. Mrs Warrior kept away from gambling because, she said: "I liked what I had and

4: Flannery & Cooper E-5 (1939-1945) 1946
NQ13 Gros Ventre NQ13

525 did not want to lose it," and her grandmother used to advise her against gambling lest she lose valued things. All in all it looks as if economic considerations had little to do with such disapproval of gambling as was current among the Gros Ventre; if anything, economic considerations and concepts of property use and disposal would in the main have reinforced approval.

To sum up, Gros Ventre attitudes on gambling appear to have been influenced very much by concern for altruism and accord, very little by economic values.

PAST AND PRESENT

525 773 To round out the picture we have tried to give of Gros Ventre gambling, we are adding a brief sketch of its history.

Gros Ventre myth, folk lore, and tradition have little to say on gambling. According to one folk story, given by Mrs Sleeping Bear, but unknown to Mrs Warrior, the hand game was first gotten from the thunder by a certain Tsē'ganis (Little Short Horns). There is no reference to gambling in the fairly complete cycle of sacred myths we gathered or in the trickster (Nihāt'ᵃ) cycle.[8] This absence, particularly from the trickster cycle, may give some slight ground for suspecting that gambling may not go back very far in Gros Ventre culture history.

525 Apart, however, from such speculative surmise, what is clear is that gambling was in full vigor among the Gros Ventre in the second half of the last century, and had been since at least around the early part of the century. It was in full swing from at least the early boyhood days of Lame Bull who was born in 1825.

525 182 Gros Ventre gambling, especially with the wheel and hand games, suffered a severe shock after the disappearance of the buffalo in 1884, as did the main structure of Gros Ventre culture and society. With the rapid collapse of the broad framework into which gambling had so trimly fitted, gambling itself, especially with the older games, rapidly toppled down. The last big wheel game remembered by five older informants—The Boy, Thick, Charles Buckman, Steven Bradley, Philip Shortman—occurred in 1893; the last big hand game in 1891.[9] Around the turn of the century not much of the older complex was

8 Gambling does however occur in the Found-in-the-Grass Gros Ventre folk story, according to The Boy. Gambling at the wheel game between Clotted-Blood and the Bull is recorded in the Clotted-Blood tale, by A. L. Kroeber, *Gros Ventre Myths and Tales* (Anthropological Papers, American Museum of Natural History, vol. 1, pt. 3, 1907), p. 86.

[115] 9 When in the field we failed to obtain these exact dates. We are indebted for them to our conscientious, high-minded and exceptionally able interpreter, Thomas Main, who procured them for us from the above five elder informants and forwarded them to us with some other supplementary information by letter of September 25, 1946.

4: Flannery & Cooper E-5 (1939-1945) 1946
NQ13 Gros Ventre NQ13

left, although we still have reports of a hand game between the Gros Ventre and the Flathead, staged at Glacier Park, Montana, as late as 1922, in which Joe Assiniboine represented the Gros Ventre. Today neither the wheel game nor the 2-button hand game is played. 525 182

Hard times, for a short period near-famine conditions, prevailed for a while after 1884; an economy of abundance gave place to an economy of scarcity. While a world survey of gambling reveals, so far as we can discern, no significant correlation between gambling and abundance or scarcity economies, extreme and sudden economic shock and shift, such as occurred among the Gros Ventre in the years immediately following 1884, may well have slowed up the gambling pace. [735]

Around 1897 the non-gambling hand game was introduced, won favor, and persists down to the present. Today there is little gambling among the Gros Ventre on the reservation. Most of what occurs among them takes place off the reservation, at nearby white villages and towns, in the form of poker or other card games for money, between Gros Ventre and whites. [177] [178]

CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF AMERICA
WASHINGTON, D. C.